

THE
NOTES
OF THE
CHURCH
CONSIDERED:
IN A
SERMON

On 1 TIM. iii. 14, 15.

Preached at **SALTERS-HALL,**

January 16, 1734-5.

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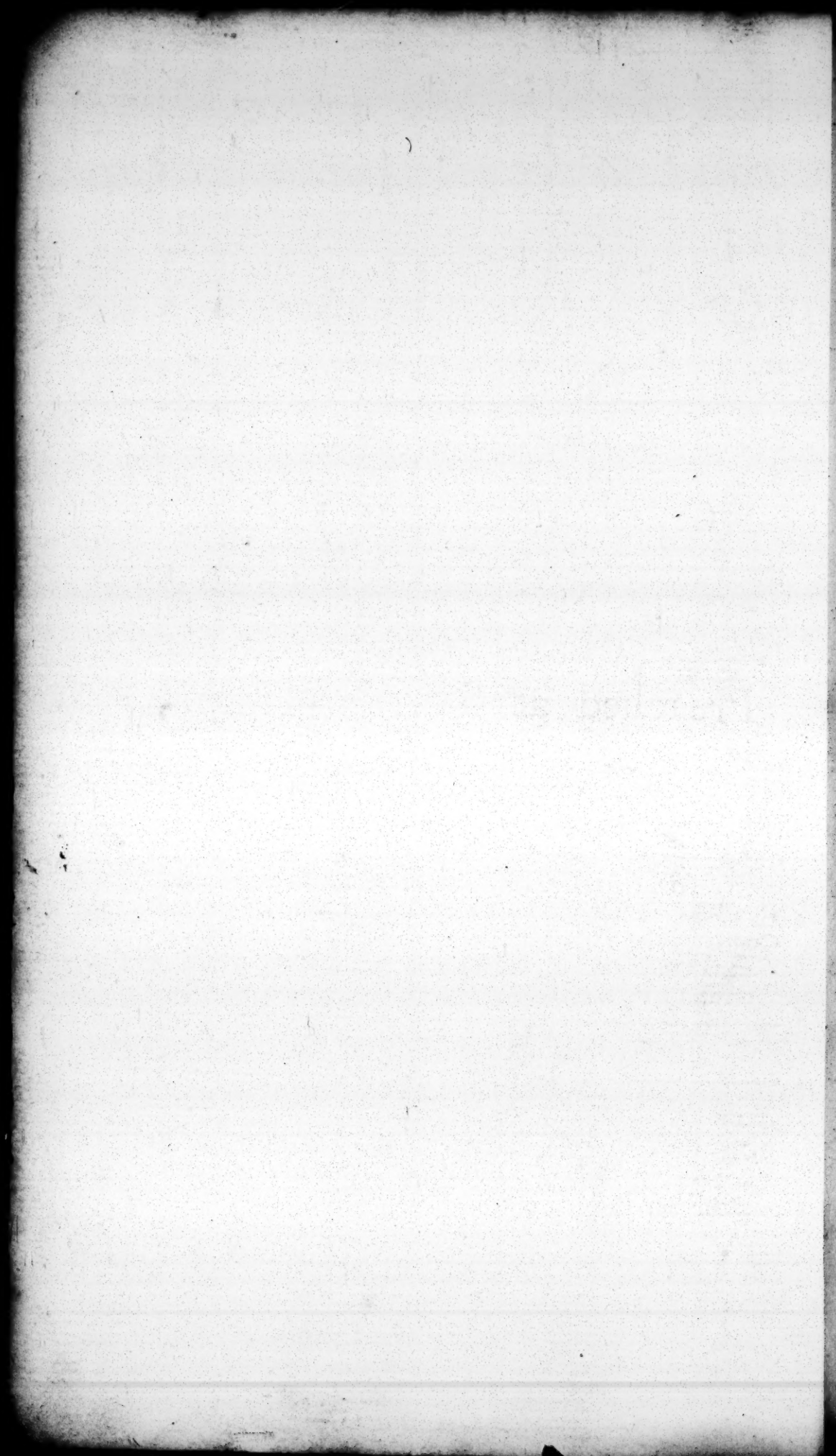
Omnes confitentur, in sola vera Ecclesia esse veram fidem,
veram peccatorum remissionem, veram spem salutis æ-
ternæ. *Bellarm. de Not. Eccles.*

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I TIM. iii. 14, 15.

These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly. But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth.



YOU have been already informed, that the design of this lecture is to represent and expose the absurdity, and antichristian nature of the corruptions and errors of the apostate church of *Rome*, and to confirm and establish you in the belief of those doctrines of the Reformation, which have the sacred writings, and all the valuable remains of antiquity to support them; that you may be always upon your guard, against the attempts of those who lye in wait to seduce you from *the simplicity* of the Christian faith, to enslave your consciences to the tyrannical impositions of imperious and cruel deceivers, and to bring you back to those impious idolatries, which are a reproach to the Christian name, and contrary to the plainest dictates of natural and revealed religion.

One would really wonder, how so monstrous a perversion of Christianity could ever take place, and by what kind of arguments and pretences, mankind could be prevailed with to embrace and submit to a Scheme, which had they consulted their senses or their reason, or the sacred records, they must evidently have discovered the falshood and imposture of; Popery being really an imposition upon, and the most palpable contradiction to the plainest testimony of each of these witnesses, as will, I doubt not, be fully demonstrated in the course of the ensuing lectures.

However, we are far from being ignorant of the *devices of Satan* on this head. Ecclesiastical history furnishes us with a variety of causes, to which this great apostasy from the Christian faith and worship hath been owing, which well deserve to be distinctly considered, and represented to you. But I shall only mention that particular one, which is more immediately and directly to my purpose, which is *the power and authority of the Church*; or rather, the superstition and tyranny of the Bishops and Clergy, who have appropriated the name of the Church to themselves, and under that venerable character have erected themselves an empire, upon the ruins of primitive Christianity, and the civil and religious liberties of mankind.

And as it is but too true, that all the great innovations, as to the Christian doctrine and worship, have been introduced by the Bishops and Clergy, under the sacred character of the Church, and as the pretended authority of the
Church

Church is *the pillar and ground* of the corruptions of Popery at this day, 'tis necessary that we lay the axe to the root, and distinctly consider these two things.

I. What the true notion of a church is.
And,

II. What are the peculiar powers and privileges it is invested with.

'Tis to the first of these I am confined. The second will be treated of distinctly by a very able hand, with whose province I shall as little as possible intermeddle.

I am then to consider what the true notion of a church is ; or what are the essential characters of the Christian church, by which it may be known and distinguished from all other assemblies and bodies of men whatsoever. And here the only possible way of forming a true judgment, is from the Holy Scriptures ; because these are the most antient records of Christianity, written by the apostles and apostolical men ; and because they are, even our adversaries being judges, the infallible word of God. Nor will they deny us the liberty of judging concerning the nature of the church by this rule, provided we will allow them these two small things, *viz.* that the church may judge for us concerning the sense of Scripture, and that the unwritten traditions of the church are of equal authority with the Scriptures themselves. And this possibly we might be willing enough to do, if this plain contradiction was
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not unfortunately in our way, *viz.* that the judging by Scripture concerning the notes of the church, and yet allowing the church to judge for us of the sense of Scripture, is rendering it impossible to form any judgment of either, and supposing that the notes of the church may be understood, before we know what in reality they are.

For if the Scriptures are to determine the marks of the church, the Scriptures must be known and understood, before we can form any judgment from them what the marks of the church are. But if the church is to judge for us what is Scripture, and what the sense of it, then we must know what the church is, and what her distinguishing marks are, before we can pretend to judge what the sense of Scripture is. The consequence of which is, that 'tis impossible to form any judgment of either. We cannot judge of the marks of the church by the Scripture, because the church is to determine the sense of Scripture; nor can we judge of Scripture by the church, because the Scripture is to settle and determine the marks by which we are to know the church. So that according to this way of arguing, neither the Church nor the Scriptures can have any certain marks to distinguish and discover them, whereby their church will be of as little signification and authority, as they would fain have our Scriptures to be.

And by further consequence, the pretending to prove by Scripture what the marks of the church are, and yet affirming that the church

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is to judge of the sense of Scripture, is supposing them to be both known before they are understood, and their authority demonstrated even whilst it is incapable of being proved.

Once more, if the Scripture be the rule whereby we are to judge of the marks of the church, the authority of Scripture must be superior to that of the church; and if the church is to determine what is Scripture, and to judge of the sense of it, the authority of the church is superior to that of the Scripture; and consequently, they are each of them of superior and inferior authority to the other; they are each of them a rule by which to judge of the other, and yet can neither of them be a rule whereby to form a judgment of either. To these shameful absurdities are the Papists reduced, by pretending to prove from Scripture what are the marks of the church, and yet affirming, that the church is to judge for all others what is the sense of Scripture. But 'tis no wonder, that they who can be stupid enough to believe, that a wafer can be changed into the body and blood and soul and Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, should be disposed and given up to believe all other absurdities and contradictions whatsoever.

But to leave them in possession of this treasure, I shall come more directly to the argument before me, and in prosecuting it, shall endeavour to do these two things.

1. To set before you the Scripture notion of a church, and what are the peculiar and distinguishing marks of it therein laid down. And,
2. To

2. To consider what are the notes or marks which the Papists give of a church, and shew you either that they are no marks of the church of Christ at all; or if they are, yet that they are notes or characters which do not belong to the church of *Rome*.

1. I am to set before you the Scripture notion of a church, and to give you the peculiar and distinguishing marks or notes of it, as there laid down. The original word ἐκκλησία, which we render *church*, denotes in general an assembly of people called or met together, either upon civil or sacred occasions. Thus the town-clerk of *Ephesus* tells the *Ephesians*, that *the law was open, and they might determine their causes in a lawful assembly*. Hence the same word is applied to any number of persons, more or less, who embraced the doctrine of the Gospel, as preach'd to them by the Apostles, and worshipped God in the name of Jesus Christ. Thus the first converts at *Jerusalem*, who consisted of about 3000 persons, ^b are expressly called the church, because they were an assembly or congregation of Christians. And when afterwards the Apostles preach'd the Gospel in other cities besides *Jerusalem*, the number of converts in each of those places constituted a distinct Christian church or congregation, each independant of the other as to all things, their common faith and worship as Christians only excepted. Thus we read of the church at *Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus*, and other places, and

^a Acts xix. 39.

^b Acts ii. 47.

and of the churches of *Galatia* and *Macedonia*, i. e. the several distinct congregations of Christians in the several cities of those provinces. Yea when the number of converts in any place did not extend beyond the branches of any one particular house or family, those converts, tho' few in number, are also called a church. Thus we read of the church at *Priscilla's* house, in the house of *Nymphas*, and with *Philemon*. And as all particular churches or congregations of Christians wherever planted, were united in one common faith and worship, under Jesus Christ their common Lord and head; as they were congregations gathered in his name, and professing a religion of his appointment; as they were all subjects of his kingdom, and governed by one body of laws: Hence the whole number of Christians, wheresoever they dwelt, are also denoted by the same word, church or congregation; because though, as to themselves, they were particular independant assemblies, yet consider'd in their relation to Christ, their common head, they were all one body, under his especial influence, protection, and government. In this sense *St. Paul* uses the word church, when he tells us, ' that *God hath put all things under Christ's feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body*. And this is all the senses in which the word ἐκκλησία or church is used in Scripture, except only once, where it seems to denote the place where Christians met for worship. *When*

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ye come together in the church, says St. Paul, ^d *I hear there are divisions amongst you*, which he explains a verse or two after, ^e *When ye come together in one place*. In other senses the word is not used in the whole New Testament.

And I observe this principally for this reason, because though the Clergy have oftentimes appropriated to themselves the name of the church, exclusive of the Christian people, yet they are never once called by this sacred name in the holy Scriptures. Yea I find that the Christian laity are stiled the church by way of distinction from those, who had any particular charge or office in it. Thus when *Paul* and *Barnabas* came to *Jerusalem*, they were received ^f *of the Church, and of the Apostles and Elders*; and when the famous decree was sent to *Antioch*, ^g *the Apostles, Elders and whole Church* sent it by messengers of their own. From which passages it appears, that the Christian laity are properly and truly the Church of Christ, in the Scripture sense of the word; and that neither Apostles, nor Bishops, nor Elders are any otherwise to be consider'd, or own'd as the church, than as they are united with the body of Christians in the same common faith, profession and hope.

And this *Bellarmino* is so very sensible of, that though he produces the words of my Text, *The church the pillar and ground of truth*, as a proof that the Clergy in a general Council cannot err; yet he doth it, not by asserting that the
word

^d 1 Cor. xi. 18.

^e Ver. 22.

^f Ver. 20.

^g Acts xv. 4.

word *Church* signifies the Clergy or Bishops, but that the whole authority of the Church or Christian people ^h exists *formally* only in the Prelates, even as the light of the whole body is *formally* in the head ; the good Cardinal taking it for granted that all the Christian people are stark blind, and thence shrewdly inferring that they are obliged to see with his, and his brethrens eyes.

But as 'tis one part of the character of a good protestant not to renounce the testimony of his senses, nor to trust to other persons eyesight whilst he has eyes of his own, so we can evidently discern that this, and many other such Texts prove nothing about the Clergy's infallibility; but that if *the church* is declar'd by St. Paul to be *the pillar and ground of truth*, this refers to the body of Christians professing, maintaining, and *holding forth* the true faith of Christ, and not to their Bishops and Pastors in contradistinction to them. Though I think the more probable interpretation is, that *the pillar and ground of truth* relates to *Timothy* himself and not to the church. The direction to *Timothy* was, how *to behave himself in the house of God*: And the advice, which the Apostle gives him, was suitable to this representation of the church, *viz.* he was to behave as one who was *a pillar in, or foundation of* that house ; which *Timothy* properly was, as an Evangelist and Prophet, and one who received his instructions immediately

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from

^h Tota auctoritas ecclesiae formaliter non est nisi in praelatis, sicut visus totius corporis formaliter est tantum in capite, Lib. II. cap. 2.

from an inspired Apostle; and was himself favour'd with some extraordinary gifts of the holy Spirit. And what confirms this sense is, that St. *Paul*,ⁱ speaking of *James* and *John* and *Peter*, says, they *seemed to be pillars*. And indeed this character of pillars is frequently applied by the primitive writers to the Apostles, as I could easily shew, were it not foreign to the present purpose.

But not to insist on this, you plainly see from what I have said, that according to Scripture, every particular congregation of Christians is a distinct and proper church; and that the catholick or universal church consists of all the several congregations of Christians throughout the world, who all together constitute that one body, of which Christ is the proper head and governour; and that therefore the Clergy's assuming and appropriating this name to themselves, is an usurpation of that honour and privilege which Christ hath conferr'd on you; on you, fellow Protestants, whom *he hath purchased with his blood*; in whom ye are *a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, and a peculiar people*; that true church of the living God, built upon the foundation of the *Apostles and Prophets*, *Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone*. And this is

1. One essential and unalterable mark or note of a Christian church or congregation; viz. the constant and firm adherence of all the members of it to Jesus Christ, as the common Head and Lord and Saviour of Christians, and the submitting themselves wholly and intirely to his influence

ⁱ Gal. ii. 9.

influence and direction; even as the members of a natural body are guided and acted by its natural head. For we *being many are one body in Christ*, and God hath given him ^k *to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who filleth all in all.*

And this I rather observe, because Bellarmine thus defines the church: *'That 'tis an assembly of men, professing the same Christian faith, under the government of lawful pastors, and particularly the Roman Pontiff, the only Vicar of Christ upon earth.* But could the Cardinal imagine, that this would be taken for granted without proof? Or that any one, who had ever read the New Testament, would prefer the Pope, who is never once mentioned in it, to the Son of God himself, who is expressly declared to be the church's head?

No: The vicarious power of the *Roman Pontiff* is a thing absolutely unknown to the Sacred Writings. 'Tis a sacrilegious usurpation of that supreme authority, with which God the Father hath invested his only Son, to whom only our submission is due in the great concern of religion, and eternal salvation, in opposition to the claims of all others, who would exclude him from the government of his church, or share with him in his legislative power. *Neither be ye called masters, for one is your master, even Christ^m,*
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^k Eph. i. 22, 23.

^l Ecclesiam veram esse cœtum hominum ejusdem Christianæ fidei professione—colligatum, sub regimine legitimorum pastorum, ac præcipue unius Christi in terris Vicarii, Romani pontificis. Tom. II. c. ii.

^m Matth. xxiii. 10.

are the words of our Lord himself to his disciples. And St. Paul, tells the *Ephesians*, " that God had raised *Christ from the dead, and set him at his own right hand,----- and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church*: Head, as Governor and Lord, to appoint the laws of his spiritual kingdom, the doctrines his people are to believe, the form of worship they are to observe, and the terms of communion and Christian salvation, by which all the members of his church are to be finally and eternally determined.

And as he sent out his Apostles, in his name, and as his witnesses, and under the conduct of his infallible Spirit, to preach his religion in the world; their testimony is the testimony of Christ, and to receive their gospel and doctrine is to receive and submit to Christ himself, as head and legislator in the church. *He that receiveth you, i. e. you my apostles, receiveth me,* ° says our blessed Lord. Hence the converts at *Jerusalem*, who were the first Christian church that was ever planted, are described as *continuing stedfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship* °.

Now as we have no full and certain account of the doctrines taught by Christ and his apostles, but from the records of the New Testament, and as these contain the whole revelation of the gospel, all that we are to believe and practise as Christians: 'Tis an undeniable consequence, that we can no otherwise demonstrate our subjection and fidelity to Christ, as
Lord

° Eph. i. 20, 22. ° Matth. x. 40. ° Acts ii. 42.

Lord and Law-giver in his church, than by our care in acquainting ourselves with the sacred Records of Truth, and religiously adhering to them as the only rule and standard of our faith and worship, as God shall enable us to understand them; in opposition to the claims of interested men to interpret them for us, and to all traditionary doctrines and practices enforced and recommended as of equal authority with them. For to argue as the Papists do about the church: Protestants and Papists agree, that the Scriptures are the infallible word of God; but they do not both agree that traditions are of equal authority with the word of God, or a sure direction in all matters relating to conscience and eternal salvation. And of consequence it must be much safer to consult, and govern our faith and practice by that rule, which is allowed on both sides to be infallible and divine, than by that which on one side is affirmed to be fallible, human, superstitious and erroneous.

But I need not such kind of arguments as these. You are Christians, the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ; and his authority, I know, you must allow to be sacred and conclusive. Hear then the command of the Son of God. *Search the Scriptures,* ^a saith he to the Jews, *for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me:* And good reason there was for this command, because an inspired apostle tells us, *All Scripture is profitable*
for

^a John v. 39.

for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, and are able to make us wise unto salvation, thro' faith in Christ Jesus.^s The letters of the several apostles are almost all of them written to the churches, and intended for their perusal and edification. And St. Paul expressly commands the *Thessalonians*, *Stand fast brethren, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or OUR EPISTLE.* And that none might be ignorant of the contents of his epistle, he tells the *Thessalonians*: *I charge you by the Lord, that this epistle be read unto all the brethren.* And the *Colossians*:^v *When this epistle is read amongst you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.* So that the writings of the New Testament were intended, fellow Christians, for your perusal; and without being acquainted with them, you can never continue in that doctrine of Christ and his apostles, the adhering to which is an essential note of the Christian church. I will only add further on this head,

That as far as men depart from this doctrine of Christ and his apostles, so far they cease to be members of the church of Christ, and are to be marked and avoided by all the faithful. Thus St. Paul advises *Timothy*, *These things teach and exhort. If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness - - from such withdraw thy-*

^s 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16.

^v 1 Theff. v. 27.

^s 2 Theff. ii. 15.

^v Col. iv. 16.

thyself. * Yea, the apostle goes yet farther, and pronounceth a severer censure on those who perverted or altered the doctrine and gospel which he preached. *There are, says he, some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But tho' we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed.* † But thus much as to the first Scripture mark of the Christian Church. I shall mention but one more, and that is

2. The mutual and firm union of those, who profess the doctrines of Christ and his apostles, in the practice of universal virtue, and especially, by the exercise of fervent charity and love; since nothing is more evident, than that the disciples of Christ are to be distinguished as much by the holiness of their lives, as the purity of their faith; and because the love of the brethren is made one of the distinguishing marks of a true Christian by our Saviour himself. *A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know, that ye are my disciples, if ye have love to one another.* ‡

'Tis, I confess, difficult to judge of inward principles and dispositions; and those who as to outward appearance may profess the true faith, and wear *the form of godliness*, may yet be some of them insincere in the sight of God, and no
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* 1 Eph. vi. 3—5.

† Gal. i. 7, 8, 9.

‡ John xiii. 34, 35.

genuine members of the church of Christ; and men, who can judge only according to outward appearances, may be deceived in the judgment of charity which they pass on them. However, we have one sure rule to go by, and may certainly conclude who are not of the church of Christ; *viz.* those who openly and avowedly pervert and *corrupt the simplicity* of the Christian Faith, by teaching doctrines absolutely subversive of the nature and design of it; and who habitually dishonour the doctrine of godliness, by the allowed immoralities of a wicked life. Or if thou knowest, Christian, any societies of men, calling themselves by the Christian name, who have put off bowels of compassion, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, charity and love, and who, instead of practising these virtues, excommunicate and damn, malign and revile, and by methods of iniquity and blood, torture and persecute and destroy others, for their adherence to the original records of christianity, and the purity of the christian Faith and Worship; thou may'st safely pronounce them to be cut off from Christ, to be *of the Synagogue of Satan*, and to be actuated by that wisdom which is *earthly, sensual, and devilish.* James iii, 14, 15.

Having thus considered the notes which the Scriptures give us of the church of Christ, I now proceed to consider those which are laid down by Popish writers; tho' I think such an enquiry is perfectly needless, considering the account they give of the church and the members of it. For as Cardinal *Bellarmino* makes it

it a mark of the church, that they submit to the *Roman Pontiff*, and expressly allows the most notorious sinners and secret infidels to be members of it, so they profess to believe as the church doth, and communicate in her sacraments: What need we any notes to discover the church? The church of *Rome* is well known, and the nations that adhere to her communion; and all the Cardinal's marks can't make her more *notorious* than she is already; and if the church of Christ and the church of *Rome* is the same thing, and this is to be taken for granted as a first principle, 'tis as ridiculous to give marks of the church, as it would be of the city of *Rome* itself, or of any other well known city or country in the world. But to pass by this, and other things of the like nature, let us examine the Cardinal's notes particularly.

N O T E I.

The first, according to the Cardinal, is *the very name of the Catholick Church.* But I think this is direct nonsense; because the catholick church is nothing but the collection of all true Christians, and particular churches, thro' the world. And therefore to answer any person enquiring: Which, amongst all who bear the Christian name, is the true church? I say to answer him, that it is that which hath the name of Catholick, is either to say, that the true church is the collection of all the true churches in the world; which is to say nothing to the purpose, because it is no answer to the

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question;

Assum catholicæ ecclesiæ nomen.

question; or, that it is some particular church that assumes the name of catholic to itself; which is to say worse than nothing, because 'tis to affirm that it is a *particular universal*. And this contradiction the name of *Roman Catholic* really implies; because 'tis saying that the particular church or congregation of persons called Christians in *Rome* is the universal church, *i. e.* all the particular churches of Christ throughout the world.

Besides, what can bare names prove, which men may take or refuse at pleasure, with reason or without it? Hereticks themselves have, as the Cardinal allows, assumed this name; and if the bare assuming of it proves any thing, they have as much right to it as the Papists.

Farther, there was a time when the word catholic could not belong to *Rome*, but did actually belong to the converts of another city, *viz.* to those of *Jerusalem*; because there were once no Christians but what were in that place, the gospel having been first published there; and therefore the word catholic can be no proof that the church of *Rome* is the only true church, because the catholic church existed before there was any Christian church in *Rome* at all. Or if by catholic church be meant, a church which holds that doctrine which is common to all Christian churches, then any church which holds that doctrine is as much the catholic church as the church of *Rome*, and therefore the mere name can be no distinguishing mark of that church.

NOTE II.

The Cardinal's second note is *Antiquity*, because, as he says, *the true church is older than the false one, as God was before the devil*. But to this it may be answered, that bare antiquity is no certain evidence of truth, because there are many errors and falsehoods which can boast of antiquity earlier than Christianity itself. Thus *Judaism*, which is now mere superstition, was older than the gospel, and idolatry older than both.

And with respect to the Christian church, we know that there were errors in it even in the apostolick age, which can never change their nature, or be transformed into truth, because of their plea of antiquity. For instance: The worshiping of angels was introduced during the ministry of St. Paul himself, and yet it must be allow'd to be superstition and idolatry. For St. Paul himself expressly condemns it as such: *Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels, vainly puffed up in his fleshly mind, and not holding the head;*^b and by consequence the church of Rome, which maintains and practises this old angel worship, doth not hold the head, but hath cut herself off from the unity of the Christian church, notwithstanding the antiquity of this superstition.

However antiquity may be allow'd to be in some sense a mark or note of the Christian church

^b Col. ii. 18, 19.

church, *viz.* when any society of Christians hold the true faith of Christ and his apostles, which was at first delivered to the saints ; and this is *Bellarmino's* sixth note, *viz.* *an agreement in doctrine with the ancient church, or with that doctrine which the apostles delivered.* And as this note is the same in the main with the second, I shall consider it here. Now as there is no way of understanding the apostles doctrine so certainly as from their writings, which are allowed even by our adversaries to be the oldest records of Christianity, this therefore is the only true antiquity to which as Christians we are to appeal. And we are content that the controversy between us and the Papists shall be decided by this ancient and infallible rule. But they, conscious to themselves, that there is nothing in this antiquity to favour their peculiar doctrines and practices, decline the trial by this sacred judge, and fly to fathers, councils and traditions, all of them later than the writers of the sacred records, and will not suffer the laity to read them, lest they should discern their gross abuses and corruptions of Christianity. However, to you, my brethren, I appeal ; and now call upon you to judge in the fear of God, on which side genuine antiquity lies. As Protestants then,

1. We renounce all dependance on the Pope of *Rome*, and acknowledge one Lord, one Lawgiver in the Christian church, *viz.* the Lord Jesus Christ ; and the reason is, not only because there is not one word about the Pope and his headship in the New Testament, but because Christ himself says ; *One is your master,*
even

even Christ; ^c and because St. Paul says: *There is but one Lord, and one faith; and that the whole family in heaven and earth is named of the Lord Jesus Christ.*^d

2. As Protestants we affirm that saints and angels are not mediators in heaven for us, and that Christ Jesus is our sole mediator and advocate. And here we have apostolick antiquity to support us. For St. Paul expressly says, that *there is but one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.*

3. As Protestants we affirm, that angels and saints have no claim to veneration and worship. Here St. Paul is on our side, who condemns it as superstition and will-worship, in the place before cited; and one greater than St. Paul, even Christ himself; whose doctrine it is: *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.* Add to this, that angels themselves have condemned this worship. Thus when St. John fell down to worship before the angel's feet, the angel said to him: *See thou do it not, for I am thy fellow-servant. Worship God.*

4. As Protestants we affirm, that in the sacrament of the Lord's supper there remains bread and wine after the consecration, and that they are not transubstantiated into the body and blood of Christ. Here also, besides the impiety, absurdity, and contradiction of the doctrine of transubstantiation, genuine antiquity is evidently on our side. For St. Paul expressly calls that which we actually eat and drink in the sacrament,

^c Eph. iv. 5.

^d iii. 15.

^e 1 Tim. ii. 5.

^f Matth. iv. 10.

^g Rev. xxii. 9.

ment, bread and wine. *As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.*^b

5. As Protestants we affirm that Christians have an equal right to the wine as to the bread in the Eucharist. For thus says St. Paul to the *Corinthians*: *As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.*^c

6. As Protestants we affirm that the Eucharist is only a memorial of Christ's death, and not a propitiatory sacrifice either for the living or dead. Let Christ and his apostle determine. *Do this*, says Christ, *in remembrance of me*^k. And that all Christians were to receive the elements with this view only, St. Paul assures the *Corinthians*^l from Christ himself. And the author to the *Hebrews* tells us, that *by one offering Christ hath for ever perfected those who are sanctified*; and that because there is remission of sins under the new covenant, there is no more offering for sin.^m

7. As Protestants we renounce the doctrine of Purgatory, and affirm that the future state is no state of probation, but a state in which men are unalterably determined for happiness or misery. And here we have scripture antiquity clearly on our side. Thus the wise man, speaking of death, says: *Then the dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it,*ⁿ without any intimation of stopping at Purgatory by the way. And

^b 1 Cor. xi. 26.

^c Ibid.

^k Luke xxii. 19.

^l 1 Cor. xi. 24.

^m Heb. x. 14—18.

ⁿ Eccles. xii. 7.

And St. Paul affirms, that at the judgment-seat of Christ every one *shall receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad*; * the necessary consequence of which is, that there can be no Purgatory antecedent to the general judgment to cleanse away mens guilt; for then they could not receive at the judgment according to the deeds done in their bodies.

8. As Protestants we affirm, that the worship of God ought to be performed in a language which all men understand. And here we have not only the plain reason of the thing with us, but apostolick antiquity too. For St. Paul tells the *Corinthians*, *If I speak with tongues, i. e. in such a language as those I speak to can't understand, what shall I profit you?* And hereupon he gives this command; *Let all things be done to edifying.* †

And finally, as Protestants we affirm that all Christians have a right to search the scriptures, and make the best use of them that they can. And here also we have the authority of Christ, *Search the scripture.* And of St. Paul, *Let the word of Christ dwell richly in you in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs.* † Which command would be impossible, if they had not the word of Christ, and the Scriptures of truth to read and consult for themselves.

Now if these Protestant doctrines are as old as Christ and his apostles, and were taught by them, as we see plainly they were, it is evident

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* 2 Cor. v. 10. † 1 Cor. xiii. 6—26.

Col. iii. 16.

that as Protestants we have the sanction of the most venerable antiquity on our side, and this note of the true church of Christ belonging to us, in its fullest perfection.

When therefore the Papists scornfully cry out, and ask us: *Where was your Church before Luther and Calvin?* The answer is obvious: That the doctrine of our church was in the writings of the inspired apostles, where theirs is never to be found; 'twas the same as was taught by Christ himself, whom they have forsaken, and whose faith they have corrupted. And as to the professors of our doctrines, they were to be found amongst those martyrs and confessors, whose blood their church hath cruelly spilt; who had from their Bishops and Clergy, and Monks, like the antient worthies, *the trial of cruel mockings and scourgings and bonds and imprisonment, who were stoned, sawn asunder, slain with the sword, wandering about, thro' their perfidiousness and cruelty, being destitute, afflicted, and tormented, of whom the world was not worthy, wandering in desarts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.* We willingly acknowledge these were our predecessors, even these persecuted disciples of the crucified Jesus, who protested against the abominations of their church, and were put to death by them for the testimony of Jesus.

But now what genuine antiquity have the Papists to boast of in vindication of their doctrine and worship? I confess that they have antiquity for many things older than the religion of Christ and his apostles: They have all the idolatrous nations of the earth, and the false prophets

prophets and deceivers amongst the *Jews*, wholly on their side, by whose authority and examples they may (if they please) vindicate their own idolatries: They have the *Egyptian* men-eaters, *Antiochus Epiphanes*, *Nero*, *Domitian*, and other monsters of mankind, who went before them in the measures of persecution, cruelty and blood: Yea, they have the example of one more antient than all of these, that we will allow them to glory in, even his, who, as our blessed Saviour tells us, *was a murderer from the beginning*.

Other genuine antiquity they have none to plead. Many of their doctrines were unknown to, or abhorred by the primitive church, and are mere novelties and innovations, that were originally introduced by superstition, and then maintained by cruelty and blood.

The supremacy of the Pope, and his title of Universal Bishop, was first confirmed by a murderer, even by *Phocas* to Pope *Boniface III*, who persuaded *Phocas* to ordain, that the church of *Rome* should be the head of all churches, and that the Bishop of it should be called, *Oecumenical* or *Universal Bishop*. This was above 600 years after Christ. And tho' *Bellarmino* denies that this title was then first given the Pope, yet nothing is more evident than that the Popes before this did not assume it as a title belonging to their See. For *Gregory the Great*, who was the immediate predecessor of *Boniface* except one in the See of *Rome*, rejected this title of Universal Bishop with abhor-

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rence, and tells *Mauritius* the Emperour in a letter to him, ' that it was ' a blasphemous title, and that no one of the Roman Pontiffs ever assumed so singular a one. And in his letter to *John*, Bishop of *Constantinople*, ^u he says to him : *What wilt thou say to Christ, the head of the universal church, in the day of judgment, who thus endeavourst to subject his members to thyself by this title of Universal? Who, I ask thee, dost thou imitate in this but the Devil?* And in his letter to *Constantia* the Empress, * he says, *His pride in assuming this title, shew'd the times of anti-christ were at hand.*

Again, the intercession of Saints and Angels is a doctrine of which there is not the least intimation in the writings of the two first Centuries, and therefore it wants the note of genuine antiquity; though it must be allowed to have been introduced in the very next Century following; *Origen* and *Cyprian* expressly favouring this superstition.

As to the worship of Saints and Angels, this is still of a much later date, especially as a standing generally received doctrine of the church. For though *Athanasius* was for worshipping Saints, yet *Cyril* who lived in the next Century

^s L. 4. Ind. 13. p. 137.

^t Absit a cordibus Christianorum nomen illud blasphemiae, in quo omnium sacerdotum honor adimitur, dum ab uno sibi dementer arrogatur. Certe pro Beati Petri, Apostolorum principis, honore, per venerandam Chalcedonensem Synodum, Romano Pontifici oblatum est. Sed nullus eorum unquam hoc singularitatis nomen assumpsit.

^u Id. Ibid. Epist. 38.

^{*} Ep. 34.

Century says,^y *We neither call the holy Martyrs Gods, nor are we used to worship them.* St. *Austin* affirms, that *neither Saints nor Angels will be worshipped.* And even as low down as *Gregory*, in the 7th Century, he tells us,^z *that Angels refused to be worshipped since the appearance of Christ.*

As to the worship of images, though superstition had brought them in in the third Century, and though as *Platina* tells us, they were in the church of *Rome* in the fourth, yet Pope *Gregory* before-mentioned, expressly condemns the worship of them, in his letter to *Serenus* Bishop of *Marseilles*.^a Yea in the 8th Century the worship of images was condemned by a Council at *Constantinople* in the Year 755, consisting of 338 Bishops. Nor was it till above 30 years after this, that this idolatry was established in the Christian Church by the second Council of *Nice* in the Year 788, by the intrigues of the Legats of *Rome*, and under the influence of *Irene* the Empress.

As to the doctrine of Transubstantiation, it doth not appear to have been so much as broached till the 8th Century, when it was so far from being received as the doctrine of the church, that it was warmly opposed by the most learned men of that age, and censured as an innovation. The name itself was no older than the twelfth Century, nor the doctrine ever decreed

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^y Cont. Jul. p. 203. Ed. Spanhem.

^z T. 3. p. 20.

^a T. 3. l. 7. Ep. 111.

or established by any general council, till the council of *Trent* in the Year 1551.

And as the sacrifice of the Mass depends on that of Transubstantiation, it must be as novel a doctrine as that; nor is any thing more certain than that the best writers for many Centuries make the death of Christ on the cross, the only propitiatory sacrifice for sin.

As to the communion in one kind only for the laity, this was never introduced till the twelfth Century; and the Council of *Constance*,^c though they decree the communion for the laity to be received only in the species of bread, yet in this decree they own, that Christ instituted the Sacrament in both kinds, and that in the primitive church this Sacrament was received in both kinds by believers; thus impudently did they obtrude their own decree on the world, in opposition to the acknowledged appointment of Christ, and the practice of the primitive Church. And yet the Papists have the face to boast of antiquity!

As to Purgatory, there is not the least mention of it in the two first Centuries, and the notion was first introduced by *Origen* in the third, or rather towards the beginning of the fourth; though *Bellarmino* himself acknowledges,^d that *Origen's* Purgatory was very different from that of the Popish church, and derived from the *Platonick* philosophy. And therefore as *Origen's* Purgatory is too late an invention to have the sanction of true antiquity, much more is the
Popish

^c L'Enf. Vol. I. p. 386.

^d T. 2. l. 1. c. 2.

Popish Purgatory too late, which tho' it takes its rise from *Origen's* is quite different from it.

As to the worship of God in an unknown language, this is not only condemned in the most exprefs manner by *St. Paul*, as hath been before observed, but is contrary to the practice of the Eastern and Western churches, for many hundred years; when the *Latin* and *Greek* were as much vulgar or common languages, as any modern languages whatsoever. Pope *John VIII* in the 9th Century, though he at first censured the *Slavonians* for celebrating Mass in their own tongue, and commanded them to do so no more, yet upon better information he wrote to their King a letter, in which he tells him, that it was not contrary to faith and sound doctrine to say Mass and Prayers in their own tongue, and therefore permitted the Gospel to be read and Prayers said in the *Slavonian* language. Nor was it till 200 years after, that Pope *Gregory VII* forbid the celebration of divine offices in this way, commanding the Prince of that nation to oppose the people herein with all his forces; which gave occasion to numberless cruelties and slaughters.

And finally as to the use of the Scriptures; that they were universally allowed to Christians for their perusal, is evident from their being translated into so many languages, and from the most exprefs testimony of the best writers, during the first twelve hundred years and more after Christ. Nor could there be any other end of pro-

prohibiting them, than to retain the people in profound ignorance, and keep them in a quiet subjection to the irrational, unscriptural and antichristian inventions and superstitions of the Priests.

By this account you see that there is no comparison between the antiquity of the Protestant and Popish doctrines; and that the true genuine antiquity is on our side; and that their distinguishing tenets and practices are mere novelties and innovations that have neither the testimony of Scripture, nor the primitive writers of Christianity to defend and support them.

N O T E III.

The Cardinal's third note is, *a perpetual and uninterrupted duration*. But this is no distinguishing note of the true church, because Idolatry and Paganism may lay a better claim to this note than the Church of *Rome*, which seem to have began from the first ages after the flood, and continue to this very day amongst many nations of the world.

Besides, as the Cardinal allows in his sixth note, that consent in doctrine with the antient apostolick church is another note of the church, it follows that where this doctrine is departed from, there can be no true church of Christ, even though there may remain the Christian name, and some external profession of Christianity. And as it hath been shewn that the church of *Rome* is scandalously departed from the apostolick doctrine, she wants the best note that can be given of her being the church of Christ.

And

And tho' there is a reason to think that there will always be a true church of Christ on earth, yet this doth not depend on any particular churches uninterrupted duration: For particular churches may grow corrupt and utterly cease, as was the case of the seven churches in *Asia*, mentioned in the *Revelations*, and yet the true faith and church be still preserved amongst others. And, of consequence, the continued duration of the church of *Rome*, as a body of Men calling themselves by the Christian name, is no proof that the faith of Christ is not perverted and corrupted by her, nor of consequence that she is the true church.

NOTE IV.

The next note is *the amplitude of the church*, or *the multitude and variety of believers in it*; because the catholick church, as the Cardinal observes, must embrace all nations, and kinds of men. But if this be a good note, I am sure the church of *Rome* can't be the true church; because it is not catholick in this respect, there being but few nations in the world comparatively, who embrace her communion. The Pagans and Mahometans are vastly superior in number to the Papists; and if the different denominations of Christians, such as Protestants, Grecians, Armenians, and others that may be named, are added together, who renounce her communion, the multitude will be much larger than the church of *Rome* can boast of.

Besides; if this be a distinguishing mark of the true church, it must be such a mark as is
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inseparable from her. But this cannot with any truth be asserted: For in our Saviour's time 'twas but a *little flock*, as he expressly calls it; and for several years it was almost wholly confined to the Jewish nation; nor can it be made appear, that there ever was a time when all nations embraced the Christian faith, much less the faith of the church of *Rome*.

The truth is, the number of believers is a purely accidental thing, and the spreading of the gospel entirely dependent on the disposals of providence. Nations that have embraced the gospel, have had it taken from them; witness the famous churches of *Asia* and *Africa*, which are now no more, tho' they were formerly more numerous than all the churches who are within the pale of the church of *Rome*: And others who now have it not, may, in God's good time, be favoured with it; the church, in the meantime, remaining the same, whether more or fewer nations embrace her faith, or enter into her communion.

The time hath been when heresy itself could boast of numbers, and *the world wondered to see itself become Arian*. But Papists will not allow that this is a conclusive argument to prove that the *Arians* were the true church of Christ.

N O T E V.

The next note is, *the succession of Bishops in the Roman church from the apostles to the present day*; a note, which tho' of no significancy, is insisted on by many who call themselves Protestants, as necessary to the validity of all sacraments and administrations in the church. But

But to all such vain pretences I answer, that the terms of salvation and communion are fixed by God in the gospel of Christ, and that a sincere compliance with them will secure men of the blessings of redemption, independent of any succession of bishops and pastors from the church of *Rome*, or any other church whatsoever. The circumstances of the Christian world, I am sure, must be very deplorable, if the validity of all administrations in the church depended on so precarious a foundation. For how shall Christians know and be assured that the succession hath never been interrupted? Who will undertake to shew them the chain whole and unbroken? A single link missing, upon this scheme, unchristians them at once, and leaves them to the uncovenanted mercies of God. And can any man of common sense, or that hath any notion of the moral attributes of God, believe this to be the gospel scheme, or that God hath left mankind to such a miserable state of uncertainty? Is there one word of this absurdity in the sacred records? or of the necessity of such a successive ordination to the efficacy of God's word, or securing the benefits of salvation? In vain hast thou shed thy precious blood, O Jesus, thou Son of the eternal God, if there be no virtue in thy sacraments, unless administered by men who can derive their orders without interruption from thy apostles! Must the efficacy of thy sufferings depend on the precarious claims of those who have no records, no certain facts to make them good? Hast thou made the validity of thy ministers services to depend on the orders they receive from the *synagogue of Satan*?

That some of the Popes of *Rome* have been monsters of wickedness, and guilty of the most execrable crimes, the Papists themselves allow. And were those monsters the bishops of Christ? Could there be no true ministers, of the Christian church, without their receiving a sanction from such impure hands? Is it any honour to Protestant Episcopacy, to derive all its claims from those who were not only a scandal to Christianity, but a reproach to men?

Besides; How shall we determine the right when the Popedom was divided, and there were two or three Popes together, anathematizing and damning each other? And yet every Christian must be sure from which of these Popes his Bishop hath derived his orders; and, which is as difficult, that this Pope was the genuine successor of the apostles, if the validity of all administrations depend upon this regular boasted succession.

I will venture to affirm that the proof of this is an absolute impossibility; and that if it could be proved, it would signify nothing, because the church of Christ depends not on the succession merely of any order of men, but on the succession and preservation of the Christian doctrine. Could the Popes of *Rome* prove their regular succession from the apostles, yet if they have departed from the apostolick faith, they are not Christian bishops, and therefore their ordinations are no more valid, than if they proceeded from an *Indian* Brachman, or a *Mahometan* Dervise. Not to add that the *Arians* heretofore boasted of this succession, as doth
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the *Grecian* church to this day; who yet will never be allowed by the church of *Rome* to be the true church upon this account.

The sixth note I have already considered.

N O T E VII.

The Cardinal's seventh note is, *the union of the members amongst themselves, and with the head, because the church is called one body, one spouse, and one sheepfold.* But if by the union of the members amongst themselves, he means their being called by any other common name than that of Christ, this note is not good; St. *Paul* having given it as one mark of schism, to say, *I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, and I of Cephas.* And if he means by the union of the members with the head, their union with the Pope as universal bishop, this can be no note of the church of Christ, because this title did not belong to the Popes, and was not assumed by them, till above 600 years after Christ, unless the Cardinal will affirm, there was no true church till the time of *Boniface III.*

Besides, the mere union of persons one with another, is no note of truth or righteousness. The Psalmist complained in his day, *The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his Anointed.* And yet this confederacy was no proof that their cause was good. In the Christian church *Arians* have been as much united as the Catholics, Pagans have been as much united as Christians, and *Mahometans* are to this day as much as either. But will this
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prove that heresy is truth, that idolatry is true worship, or *Mahomet* upon a level with the Son of God?

But supposing that unity is a note of the true church, how will this prove the church of *Rome* to be that church? Are there no differences then of importance amongst the members of her communion? Supposing there is not, yet how they have maintained the union they boast of? Why, by violence, and the terrors of the civil power: By massacres, dragging, and the *cruel mercies* of an horrid inquisition: Or else by keeping their people ignorant of the word of God, that they may not have eyes to see, and ears to hear, and hearts to understand, that they might be converted and saved. And is an union, promoted by such antichristian methods, a note of the true Christian church?

But how vain is this pretence to unity amongst the members of the church of *Rome*. Even those they call heads of their church, have differed from each other. ^f *Stephen VI.* abrogated the decrees of Pope *Formosus* his predecessor, drew his body out of his sepulchre, cut off his fingers which he used in ordination, and threw them into the *Tiber*; alledging as a reason, that he obtained the Popedom by perjury. *Romanus* the next Pope, abrogated all the decrees of his predecessor *Stephen*; and as *Platina* observes, this quarrel had such bad influence, that every following Pope infringed, or wholly abrogated the acts of the foregoing.

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^f *Platina.*

But this is but a small matter. The Christian church was divided for near forty years together, by the factions of the Anti-Popes, there being sometimes two, sometimes three together, each of them asserting that he was the only lawful Pope, and anathematizing the other, and putting the Princes and people who would not acknowledge them under an interdict.

And as the heads of their church have been thus divided, so also have the members of it too, and indeed are to this day. Thus the Jesuits and Jansenists are as much divided as any Protestants about Predestination and the like articles; the *Dominicans* and *Franciscans* about the immaculate Conception of the Virgin *Mary*. Others of them differ about the infallibility of the Pope: Others whether the supreme power resides in a General Council or the Pope; the Synod of *Constance* determining for the Council, that of *Trent* for the Pope: Others finally, about the obligation of the Pope's constitution *Unigenitus*, and the truth of the doctrines contained in it.

And these differences amongst the Papists are some of them of the highest importance in their scheme, and relate to the foundations of the church, and therefore of much greater consequence than any amongst consistent Protestants, who all of them agree in one common infallible head of the church, and in one fixed unalterable rule of faith and worship.

N O T E VIII.

The eighth note, and the only one which I
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shall further mention, is, *sanctity of doctrine*; and the church, as Bellarmine observes, is called *holy*, because its profession is holy, containing nothing false as to doctrine, nothing impure as to morals. As to this note I would observe, that any person, or particular church's assuming the name of holy, doth not prove that it is actually so. For thus the *Jews* amidst their most abominable corruptions, said to others, *Stand by, for I am holier, than thou*; who yet were an offensive smock before God: Nor doth it follow, that because the true church of Christ, in all ages and nations, hath a just title to the character of holy, that therefore the church of *Rome*, or any other particular church, is an holy church; because particular churches may depart from the purity of the Christian profession: And that this is really the case with the church of *Rome*, may be made evident by almost innumerable particulars. Give me leave to mention a few out of many.

The doctrine of the Pope's supremacy, and of his plenitude of power, and of his being the visible head of the church, is not a doctrine of godliness but gain, and hath been actually abused to the most enormous immoralities. 'Tis in itself an impious invasion of the prerogative and legislative power of Christ, who is the sole head of the church, and hath never appointed any visible head or substitute, under him. Under this pretence, Popes have been guilty of the most execrable wickednesses: They have absolved men from the obligations
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of the most sacred oaths, broken the publick faith, excited subjects to rebellion against their Princes, warranted private assassinations and secret murders, sanctified unnatural conspiracies, and publick massacres; dissolved matrimonial contracts, and justified adulterous and incestuous marriages, and granted absolution to the most notorious and abominable sinners. I have indisputable facts for all these things, which even Papists themselves cannot deny.

Again, the intercession of Saints and Angels, and the adoration they pay to them, and the veneration they give to images, wafers, pictures, relicks, and the like things, is a defiling the temple of God with idols, and in some respects as sordid an idolatry as ever was practised by the Heathens; who indeed some of them worshipped animals to us detestable, but to them useful and beneficial. Whereas Papists bow down to dead bodies, and even the smallest bones or fragments of those bodies; which had they but touched under the *Jewish* dispensation, they must have remained *unclean seven days*. Yea the law was yet severer: *Whosoever toucheth a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days. And the man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from the congregation.* And yet have I myself seen, the bone of a dead man enshrined in silver, solemnly placed on the pretended altar of God, sprinkled with incense, receiving adoration from a purpled Priest, elevated to the people, presented to an high-born

F Imperial

² Numb. xix. 16, 20.

Imperial Princess, and reverently and devoutly saluted by her on her knees, as if her Saviour had been present, and come in person to demand her subjection and homage. Good God ! Is this idolatry, this worship to a bone, the religion of Jesus ? Is this the purity of the faith and worship of Rome ? *O my soul come not thou into her secret, unto her assembly mine honour be not thou united.*

Again, what is there in their doctrine of Transubstantiation but a mixture of absurdity, contradiction and blasphemy ? The Priest he pretends to turn his bread into his Saviour's body and blood and soul and divinity. Presently he adores him, and holds him up to the people for adoration. Then he immediately devours him, digests him, and at last casts him out as an unclean thing, modesty forbids me to mention where.

How evidently are the doctrines of purgatory, private masses, auricular confession, priestly absolution, penances and satisfactions, venial sins, and the like falsehoods, all calculated to promote the practice of sin, and render men easy in the commission of it ? But it would be an almost endless task, to run thro' all these and other doctrines of Popery, and shew you how they are calculated for the church's gain, and to defeat the great design of the gospel revelation, which is to prepare men, by the practice of universal holiness and virtue, for the reward of eternal life. And yet the good Cardinal assures the world, that his catholick church maintains no error, no turpitude, and teaches no

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thing contrary to reason, tho' it doth many things above it. But thanks be to God, we know their errors, and detest their abominations, and are as sure that they have corrupted the simplicity of the Christian faith, and the purity of the Gospel worship, as we are that the Scriptures are the infallible word of God. And therefore let me, as an inference from the whole,

Exhort you to beware of all approaches to the communion of the church of *Rome*; for if she is fairly and impartially tried by some of her own notes, she must be condemned as a false and antichristian church. I know very well, that there are amongst us men who allow her to be a true, tho' corrupted church, and who derive their own succession of Bishops from those of her communion, and think that the validity of their own sacraments and orders depends on her preserving that succession entire; and who farther freely allow that men may be saved within the pale of the *Romish* church, according to the terms of the gospel covenant.

And I own that these and such like concessions may be very necessary to the support of some certain schemes, pretences and claims. But I am very certain it is doing no credit, nor bringing any security to the Protestant cause; especially as those who make these allowances to the church of *Rome*, condemn all who dissent from themselves, as guilty of schism, and all their sacraments and administrations as null and void.

But let us take heed, fellow Protestants, of such large and fatal concessions as these; which

those of the *Romish* church actually employ to inveigle and deceive men into their communion. They tell them, that Protestants themselves allow their church to be a true one, and that persons may be saved in and by their communion. And if this be so, What effectual reason can be urged to prevail with men to forsake it, or hinder others from embracing it?

But I think nothing is more evident, than that the church of *Rome* cannot be, in any sense, the true church of Christ, because she hath forsaken both the doctrines and worship of that church. Her doctrine is impure, and her worship idolatrous. The gospel she believes and preaches is a quite different one from what was taught by Christ and his apostles, and she hath made void the commandments of God by her traditions. She teaches, forgive the expression, 'tis not mine, but St. Paul's, "*doctrines of devils, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving.*" Her coming hath been after the working of Satan with power, signs, and lying wonders, with all deceiveableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they receive not the love of the truth that they may be saved. She leads men to other Saviours and Mediators besides the only one which God hath appointed, even Jesus Christ, and boasts of another fund of merits for sinners to depend on, besides those of the crucified Redeemer. She hath absolutely altered the terms of Christian communion and salvation, and teaches men how

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^h 1 Tim. iv. 1, 3.

to commute with Almighty God, and compound for the grossest immoralities of a wicked life. She hath uncharitably excommunicated all who have protested against her corruptions, and is therefore a schismatical as well as an apostate church. She hath altered the institutions of Christ, in opposition to what she owned to be his will, and the practice of the primitive church, and is therefore *self-condemned*, and guilty of heresy as well as schism.

Now is it possible that that church, that idolatrous, heretical, and schismatical church can be the true church of Christ; or if we allow her to be a branch of Christ's church, is she not a branch that beareth no good fruit, or rather, a corrupted, withered, dead branch of the true vine? Or, to use *Bellarmino's* comparison, can she be considered in any other relation to the true church, than as *the hairs, or nails, or evil humours in an human body, i. e.* such things as men cut off and purge out from their bodies, to preserve the decency and life of them? How then can that part of the church, which hath no vital principal herself, give life to her members? How can they be saved by the communion of that church, which hath no more relation to the true church of Christ, than the dead branches have to the vine, or our very excrescences to the human body.

Were there any of the members of that church here present, I would beseech you by the mercies of God, and the love of Jesus, and the compassion due to your own souls, that you would consider what danger you are in, by believing

believing the errors, and conforming to the practices she enjoins. Can any of you imagine that a man can make his God, and a priest turn a wafer into his Saviour? Can you eat your Saviour and God at a morsel without trembling? Can you trust to the mediation of saints and angels, in defiance to the plain doctrine of an inspired apostle, affirming that there is but *one Mediator between God and man, even the man Christ Jesus*? Will you dare to worship pictures of the invisible God; when God himself tells you, you shall neither *make images, nor bow down to them and serve them*? Will you venture to venerate and worship the dead bodies and bones even of saints, who were they living, would reject such adoration with abhorrence? Is not this barefaced idolatry, thus to give adoration, though of an inferior kind, to mere idols, without any warrant from God, yea, in direct opposition to his most express order to the contrary? And can these idolatrous practices be vindicated by any other arguments, than those which the Pagans of old used in vindication of their superstitions and idolatries?

At least, let me prevail on such, if any there be here, to make a fair examination, and to try these doctrines and practices by what, your own priests being judges, is the infallible word of God. As Protestants we desire not to be believed for our own word. We appeal to the most authentick antiquity and authority. And we would have you appeal to, and judge by the same; and if your priests and confessors refuse you this liberty, doth it not look like suspecting

suspecting their own cause? Must it not be because they dare not trust the decision to that sacred and impartial judge? I know they will tell you, that the Scriptures are hard to be understood. Ask them then, why they appeal to Scripture for the truth of some of their own doctrines, and whether there be no passages of Scripture plain, but just those which they quote? If they tell you, 'tis dangerous to read the Scripture, ask them, why then did Christ command us, *Search the scriptures*? Did the Saviour of mankind give this command only to ensnare men into dangerous errors? Or is this the only infallibility of the word of God, that it will infallibly lead those who honestly read it into damnable mistakes? 'Tis impiety to assert it, and blasphemy against the Holy Spirit of God, under whose inspiration it was originally written.

How God will deal with those who, in the *Romish* church, are invincibly ignorant of the Christian faith, and destitute of the word of salvation to enlighten them, I will not pretend to determine. I am far from absolutely excluding them from all share in his tender mercies. However, sure I am that Popery is not the religion of Christ, and that Idolatry is represented in Scripture as one of those crimes for *which the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience*. And therefore tho' there may be a possibility of their escaping eternal condemnation in that church, it cannot be as members of it, nor according to the settled conditions of the gospel salvation; and we must, I think leave them

them in the same state as *Jews, Mahometans,* and *Pagans*, to the uncovenanted mercies of God, and to the disposals of his infinite wisdom, who will deal with all men according to equity and truth, and accept *every one in every nation, who fears him, and worketh righteousness.* This possibly may in some men's judgment be counted uncharitableness. But I would fain know, whether the worship of an image, a picture, a crucifix, a dead body, or an old bone, be not as stupid idolatry, and as flat a contradiction to the gospel religion, and as expressly condemned by it, as the idolatries of Paganism? Will any then vindicate Christians in these idolatries, and condemn the Pagans? Or allow salvation to the one, and exclude the other from it? This is judging deceitfully and partially, and is a very inconsistent conduct. Either let them fairly acknowledge, that idolatry is no deadly crime, nor declared inconsistent with the terms of the Christian covenant, or let them equally censure it where-ever they find it.

But as to those who have been bred up in the Protestant religion, and have the liberty of consulting the oracles of truth, for such to embrace the errors and idolatries of the antichristian church of *Rome*; what excuse can be made for their madness? With what plea can they vindicate so shameful an apostasy? Do they not willingly exchange truth for error, and the worship of God for an impure superstition? Can the traditions of men be a surer guide than the oracles of the God of truth? Or can any one think himself safer in a church, whose faith
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But I believe I am speaking to few comparatively, who have thus *made shipwreck of their faith and a good conscience*. Protestant Dissenters are too jealous of their liberties, ever to be brought to sacrifice them to the proud claims of ambitious Priests, and too well established in the grounds of the Protestant Religion, ever to exchange it for the fopperies and deceits of *Rome*. You are acknowledged even by her missionaries *to be immoveable*, and they reap their harvest from another field.

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disguises they may wear, enemies to the Protestant religion and liberties, and avow the most dangerous and pernicious principle of all Popery.

Take heed farther of every thing that may give advantage to the common enemy ; and particularly of favouring the principles of infidelity, and of that indifferency in religion, which exposes men to be practised upon by cunning deceivers, and is indeed a scandal and a reproach to the Protestant name and cause. The abusing liberty to licentiousness naturally prepares the way for slavery ; and when persons are indifferent to all religions, they will when danger threatens them, interest invites them, or delusive appearances draw them, be ready to receive any. And it will be a plausible argument in the mouths of Popish Priests and Missionaries to seduce others to their corrupt communion : See the effects of this boasted liberty amongst Protestants ! The same men who have rejected our communion, have thrown off their Christianity too ! They have renounced our religion, and are grown indifferent to all. And though this kind of arguing from men to principles is fallacious and inconclusive, yet it hath a tendency to make unfavourable impressions of the Protestant cause, on the minds of the generality, who will much easier be persuaded to embrace a false religion, than to have none at all.

I therefore beseech you, by all that is valuable to you as Christians and Protestants, that you endeavour to adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour, by being exemplary in the prac

tic

tice of every virtue, especially *with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.* Let us beware of a censorious, dividing, and uncharitable temper. 'Tis inconsistent with the fundamental principle of Protestantism, the liberty of private judgment, and with the genuine spirit of Christianity, which inculcates the most extensive benevolence. Differences of opinion there are in the church of *Rome*, and differences there will be in all churches to the end of time. But whilst we adhere to one rule, and interpret that rule as God enables us to understand it, should our differences in lesser matters divide our hearts, or destroy that brotherly affection, which ought to unite us under our different apprehensions? 'Tis one note that the church of *Rome* can be no true church, because she hath no charity; and curses, anathematizes and damns all who will not submit to her usurpations. Oh that the same fatal spirit had never enter'd into the churches of the reformation, to disturb their peace, to distress their friends, and give their enemies an occasion of triumph! Were Protestants, like the primitive Christians, *of one heart and spirit*, did they like them stedfastly continue in the Apostles doctrine, and were they but careful more generally to practise the virtues of the Christian life, the Protestant religion could not fail to triumph over all the cheats and impostures of *Rome*, and the most subtle attempts of her Missionaries to corrupt and enslave us would be absolutely ineffectual.

Finally, if, as we have been informed, Popery is advancing with large strides into the nation, and numerous converts are bought into the communion of the church of *Rome*, why should not those, who are firm friends to the Protestant religion, use some of the self-same methods to prevent the growth of Popery, which Jesuits and others use to propagate it. I am well assured, that if the missionaries who are now amongst us make any harvest, 'tis amongst the lower and poorer part of the nation. And to what is this success amongst them owing? To their poverty and ignorance, cunningly applied to, by liberality on the one hand, and books of instruction and devotion (as they are called) on the other. Their necessities are often relieved by the charity of the Popish nobility and gentry; they have coals provided for them, to support them under the severities of the winter; they have persons to apply to under their illnesses, and remedies freely given them, to heal their diseases: And being subdued by the kindness of those who thus minister to them in their necessities, How can they think ill of a religion that thus prompts men to acts of goodness? Especially when artful books are put into their hands, in which the sound of Scripture itself is abused, in defence of doctrines that are a contradiction to the genuine sense of it.

And may we not here learn policy from our enemies? *Fas est & ab hoste doceri.* What should hinder you from being as generous as they? If the poor are most in danger, 'tis every good man's duty to endeavour to prevent
their

their being corrupted. God hath blessed many of you with plentiful fortunes, and how can you better employ them than in the support of liberty and true religion? Your own plenty should render you compassionate to the wants of the poor. And if those of you who are able, would in the several neighbourhoods where you live, consult the necessities of the indigent, by helping them under the rigours of winter, and directing some prudent and careful persons to make suitable application to them, under their bodily disorders; I am persuaded such methods would have their desired success, and the progress of Popery be effectually prevented; especially if Bibles, and some small Books of Devotion, and others containing the grounds of religion in general, and those of the Protestant religion in particular, were seasonably distributed amongst them: As to which latter article, I beg leave to say, that if the Gentlemen in the Dissenting interest are but willing to encourage such a charity, your ministers will be glad, many, I believe all of them, not only to draw up such Books as may be proper, but to put them into such hands as may most need them.

I have done, when I have only added, that if Popery be really increasing, and if even the Prelates of the Establishment are sensible of it; methinks they should be sensible of the necessity of a stronger union amongst all Protestants, and rendered willing by the sense of their own danger, to take away every occasion

on that may divide or discontent them. We are indeed publickly told, * *that any contention to shew favour to Dissenters, whilst the nation is alarmed at the growth of Popery, must be a weakness in those Dissenters who promote it, and perhaps be the only sure means to prevent favour from being extended to them in any future time.* I pretend not to direct those worthy Gentlemen who are in the direction of our affairs, how or when to act: May the God of Wisdom direct them. But as a Minister of the Gospel I will venture to affirm, that no time can be improper to rescue the ordinances of Christ from an abandoned prostitution; as a Lover of Liberty I beg leave to say, that every time is improper to lay hardships upon faithful subjects, or continue them when laid: As a Protestant, I think there can be no lasting security against the tyranny of Popery, unless we thoroughly renounce all the principles of it, and never oppress men in any instance for their religion and their conscience; and if the danger of its increase be really such as is apprehended, I think all who value the Protestant cause, must be ready to do justice to their Protestant brethren, and thus render them intirely easy: But if this very alarm is made the reason of refusing them this justice, thoughtful men will be too ready to suspect, that 'tis only a *political fetch*, to keep those silent, who have so long had reason to complain, and to prevent their application for the recovery of those rights which they have so justly deserved, by
their

* Courant of January 10.

their readiness to save even the Established Church in the time of her danger, and by a long and uninterrupted zeal for the Family and Person of his present Majesty, for whose prosperity we daily pray, and to whose Government we wish increasing Honour and Success.



POSTSCRIPT.

I FIND the last paragraph of this Sermon hath given great offence, and been represented as a design to expose and ridicule the Lecture itself. Suspicion imagines every thing, and ill-nature will say any thing, and 'tis almost impossible to guard against either. I have been myself fully convinced that Popery is gaining ground amongst us, and I therefore engaged in the lecture, with no view to act a treacherous part in it, as hath been cruelly reported of me, but to do all I could, with the rest of my brethren, to guard others against the insinuations of Popish missionaries, to pervert them to their antichristian practices and doctrines.

Nevertheless, as the Bishop of *London*, in his circular Letter to the clergy, tells them, that the increase of Popery is not so great as
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hath been apprehended ; and yet as the author of the *Courant*, referred to, urges this increase as a reason why the Protestant Dissenters should make no application for the redress of their grievances, and insolently threatens them if they do : I must have the liberty to say it again, that thoughtful men will apprehend, that the alarm of the growth of Popery, just at this juncture, to which the Dissenters have been advised and encouraged to refer their hopes of relief, by the gentlemen who have the management of their affairs, as well as others, is made use of as a *political fetch* to silence and disappoint them ; if an occasion be taken from hence to refuse them the liberty of applying, or render ineffectual such an application if made. The *Courant* before mentioned gave rise to the passage complained of ; and tho' the observation I drew from it may be displeasing to some, surely it cannot be so to any who are heartily in the dissenting Interest, or lovers of the religion and liberties of their country. To be censured by such would give me real pain. The censures of others give me neither pain nor fear.

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